**Chapter 6**

# The Korean Wave Inside Out[1]

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## The Korean Wave and cultural policy

In the last two decades, Korea has undergone a remarkable image upgrade to a cool centre of global pop cultural production. This is a dramatic event given that the country's culture was little known to outsiders until the 1990s. Cultural production and dissemination used to be a domestic affair whereas its forms and styles were under heavy Western influence, especially with European high arts predominating arts curricula in schools and US films and pop songs enjoying huge popularity. The fierce, and even violent, protests of Korean filmmakers against the direct distribution of Hollywood films by US studios in the 1980s plainly demonstrated the weak position of local cultural industries vis-à-vis global market forces. International researchers and media seldom showed interest in Korean culture, implying that the country, as one of the East Asian tigers, might have become significant economically but not culturally. In this context, Samuel Kim, a seasoned scholar in East Asian international relations and Korea's foreign relations, noted in his concluding chapter of the book *Korea's Globalization* that 'one would search in vain to find in Korea's exports any made-in-Korea cultural products, whether computer software, music, movies, TV program, or books' (S. Kim 2000: 257). Then, the impressive growth of Korean cultural industries and the surging overseas demand for their products suddenly put the country in the limelight. 'Korean Wave' or 'Hallyu', a term coined firstly by the Chinese-speaking media, initially referred to the tidal and endemic popularity of Korean pop culture products in China and Asian societies.[2] With the popularity spreading beyond

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[1] This chapter was published in **Lee, Hye-Kyung (2018) Cultural Policy in South Korea: Making a New Patron State. London: Routledge**. See Chapter 6 The Korean Wave Inside Out.

[2] It is interesting to find that the keywords 'Hallyu' and 'Korean Wave' have 6,340,000 hits and 1,890,000 hits on Google respectively as of 20 September 2016 while '韩流' ('Hallyu' in Chinese) continues to lead with 30,300,000 hits, indicating the unceasing appeal of Korean pop culture to Chinese-speaking communities.

Asia, this term established itself as a common descriptor of the global recognition and consumption of Korean contemporary culture.

When it comes to the Korean Wave's relationship with cultural policy, opinions are not unitary. On the one hand, there is a mainstream economic viewpoint that sees Korea as a beneficiary of globalisation and free capital flows and argues that deregulation, market competition and free trade were pre-conditions for the innovation and success of the Korean cultural sector (J.-S. Kim 2007; Korea Times 2013). The market-driven business strategies of the pop music industry might be a relevant example here but it should be noted that many other cultural industries such as film and animation have relied on state policies in mobilising financial and other types of resources. On the other hand, a number of researchers highlight the Korean government's dedicated support for cultural businesses and their export efforts. They point to the crucial role a nation state can play to champion domestic cultural industries even in the age of market-driven globalisation (J.-E. Chung 2012; Jin 2006, 2014, 2016; Kwon and Kim 2013).

It is interesting to consider these different viewpoints against the backdrop of the existing debate where Korea's economic performance – both economic success and failure – has been made sense of from the two opposing perspectives. For example, was the country's spectacular economic development in the 1960s and 1970s a consequence of its adoption of a market economy, or the state-controlled development of it? (Haggard and Moon 1993; Öniş 1991). Was the financial crisis that broke out in 1997 caused by the government-led management of economy, or the country's hasty embrace of the neoliberal style of economic governance in the 1990s? (Chang 1998; Lim 2009). Symbolising the nation's economic success in the post-crisis and post-industrial era, the Korean Wave appears to be another point for debate, where the supposed roles of the market and the state in steering cultural industries are advocated and legitimised. Regardless of which viewpoint is taken, however, 'industrial development' and 'export' tend to set the discursive boundary so that policy

makers, media and ordinary Koreans are left with limited room for contemplating non-economic (aesthetic, social, political and civic) dimensions of popular cultural production and consumption.

In the meanwhile, there are voices of discontent that suggest that the Korean Wave has been hijacked and instrumentalised by state cultural policy. For instance, Jungbong Choi (2015) discusses the crosscurrent in the Korean Wave: 'hallyu' (the Korean Wave) as a creative cultural phenomenon initiated by overseas fans of Korean pop culture vs. 'hallyu-hwa' (Korean Wave-isation) as a state-run campaign driven by the government, media and other institutional stakeholders. While offering a persuasive critique of the institutionalisation of the Wave and its dubious effects, Choi finds that the state project gains popular currency as it strikes a chord with Korean people's desire for external recognition as an important source of their national and cultural confidence. Similarly, it has been observed that the Korean Wave is used as a cool nation brand for almost anything Korean that is exportable and Korean Wave themed projects as a popular post-industrial option for both national and local economic strategy (H.-K. Lee 2013). Yet, the relationship between the Korean Wave and cultural policy is reciprocal and mutually-influencing: the policy both instrumentalises and encourages the Wave; and the Wave reorients the policy towards transnational consumerism and 'post-cultural' approach to cultural policy.

This chapter intends to probe into the intersection and interactions between the Korean Wave and cultural policy. It will examine how the government and its agencies have 'captured' the Wave and absorbed it into the domain of statist cultural policy, and how the discourse of Korean Wave, in turn, has rearranged the policy's boundaries, goals, modus operandi and participants. Importantly, the exploration lies on the contemplation of cultural globalisation as a 'national project', meaning that the Korean government tries to actively manage cultural globalisation by purposefully turning it into a national development strategy. Korean Wave as an outbound globalisation strategy is centred on its contribution to nation branding, export and diplomatic endeavours. This strategy corresponds with overseas consumers' multifaceted responses crisscrossing across entertainment, leisure, learning and

other terrains of everyday life (J. Choi 2015): it ranges from enjoying K-pop or drama, developing positive images of the country, trying Korean food, learning the Korean language and traditional culture, buying Korea-branded products, visiting Korea, to yearning for experiencing everything Korean. With the fusion among diplomacy, entertainment media, export promotion, tourism and fandom, the conceptual and analytical distinction between the Korean Wave as a cultural phenomenon and Korean Wave as a state project becomes increasingly murky.

At the same time, we should note that the Korean Wave works as an inbound national strategy as well, where Koreans are encouraged to live the positive nation brand 'K' and communicated with various public policy messages packaged with signifiers of the Korean Wave. Interestingly, the Wave has been incorporated into various policy campaigns including those intended to assist the 'neoliberal socialisation' (McGuigan 2015) of young-generation Koreans, that is, their forming of a new ethic and subjectivity suitable for post-industrial and neoliberal working and living conditions in contemporary Korea.

**Korean Wave as a cultural phenomenon**

Industry professionals note in retrospect that the Korean Wave was a 'cultural phenomenon', which they never anticipated. In fact, both the Korean government and the public were amazed by the sudden popularity of Korean pop culture in some Asian countries in the second half of the 1990s, but regarded it as a one-off oddity. Their assumption was wrong, however, and the fever went on to expand across the region and beyond. Clearly, the Korean Wave contests the view that equates globalisation with cultural imperialism, standardisation, homogenisation, or Americanisation. It is emblematic of cultural contra-flows, or regional and global dissemination of culture and media coming from a periphery (Thussu 2007). It recentres the process of globalisation (Iwabuchi 2002) by challenging the unitary directions of mainstream flows originating in global cultural centres such as the United States. In the same way that Korea's state-led capitalistic economic development was a

'national' – rather than Westernising – project, its experience of globalisation is not simply subsumed to the theory that sees globalisation as Westernisation, or the global diffusion of Western modernity.

Meanwhile, 'cultural hybridisation' has been a major theoretical framework for the existing analysis of the Korean Wave. That is, globalisation does not necessarily mean the weakening of nation states or national culture as it can trigger and facilitate a reinforcement and reinvention of local culture (Pieterse 1994). At the conjuncture between transnational and national forces, hybridity emerges through new practices of cultural expressions, such as local cultural producers inventing new forms, styles and contents of culture by creatively adapting and articulating global cultural forces with their own local traditions, tastes, styles and social norms, and the domestic audience actively appreciating music, film and TV programmes from abroad and inscribing their everyday meanings into them (Ryoo 2008; Shim 2006). In this sense, cultural globalisation as hybridisation is believed to engender 'the third space', where new kinds of connections and dialogues with other cultures can take place.

This understanding of cultural globalisation resonates with the view that the increased sharing of Asia-originated popular culture, such as Korean pop culture, in the region opens up possibilities of transcultural dialogue, connection and understanding among Asian societies. Scholars also believe that Asian audiences' consumption of Korean pop culture such as TV drama, film and music can be a reflexive practice where they can have a fresh look at their identity, life and the socio-cultural conditions they are living under and imagine potential alternatives (Y. Cho 2011; Iwabuchi 2013; Y. Kim 2013). Transnational cultural consumption of this kind is seen as widening the audiences' horizons and pool of reference points, prompting their mundane reflexivity and motivating their everyday creativity. This is not exactly what Arjun Appadurai calls 'globalisation from below' (e.g., international civil society) but those who research the Korean Wave from cultural studies perspectives tend to be quite positive about the reflexive and empowering aspects of Asian audiences' 'imagination in social life' (Appadurai 2005:6-7) through the consumption of Korean pop culture.

As for what actually triggered the Korean Wave, there are multiple explanations. The first is the socio-cultural changes in the receiving societies. The second half of the 1990s and into the 2000s saw the growth of middle classes in Asia and their surging demand for popular cultural products (Fung 2013; Y. Kim 2013). Despite differences in terms of time and scope, many countries in the region went through economic development and became more exposed to foreign cultural imports. In particular, there was a rise of cultural consumers who pursued urban lifestyles and were equipped with a transnationalised cultural appetite and who had growing desires and tastes for quality cultural products regardless of the country of origin. The expansion of cultural markets and the increased consumer demand for pop culture products in the region was a happy coincidence for Korean cultural industries, which strengthened their production capacity during the 1990s when freedom of expression and cultural experiments were encouraged and socially appreciated, and cultural businesses began adopting more systematic management approaches (Shim 2006, 2008). As of the late 1990s and early 2000s, the industries could create a range of cultural products, from TV dramas to computer games, which had high production values and, thus, had the power to attract overseas consumers.

The increasing demand for Korean pop culture was also situated within the shifting political economy of the region's media industries, especially the trend of deregulation and liberalisation. For example, the Taiwanese TV industry was deregulated in the early 1990s, opening the door to Japanese TV drama series and shows, and later Korean pop culture products that were cheaper in price (Huang 2011; Shim 2008). The gradual deregulation of Chinese cultural markets, especially TV, also meant a new opportunity for its domestic audience to be exposed to selected foreign products that satisfied government censorship. As a cultural hybrid, Korean pop culture has worked as a bridge or buffer between Asia and the West (Ryoo 2008: 145). Unlike US TV dramas that are embedded in individualism and sexual freedom, Korean productions skilfully mix Asia's modern outlook and imageries (its affluent middle classes, urban landscape, modern lifestyle, trendy fashion

and consumerism) with conservative and traditional values (the importance of family, respect for the elderly and the avoidance of explicit sexual expression). In short, Korea's experience of cultural hybridisation and embedded modernisation makes its pop cultural expressions appealing and relevant to Asian audiences (Chua and Iwabuchi 2008).

Researchers have highlighted the idea of 'cultural proximity' as a key determinant of the Asian region's warm acceptance of Korean pop cultural products. This idea was firstly explored in regard to Latin Americans' preference for national and regional media products (Straubhaar 1991) and was further articulated to explain pan-Asian consumption of Japanese pop culture since the 1990s (Iwabuchi 2002). Then, the rise of the Korean Wave created a new momentum to enrich the discussion. Cultural proximity in Asia (mainly East Asia) in its simplest sense refers to the sharing of Confucian cultural heritage and the prevalence of traditional culture that defines social relations and gender roles in Asian societies. Yet, another layer of cultural proximity is generated by these societies' engagement with similar patterns of economic catch-up, shared experience of living in the contemporary world and a feeling of coevality. This apparently leads to the trend of isomorphism in cultural tastes and desires in the region, and its intensification by the region's sharing of Korean pop culture.

More recently, the Korean Wave has begun to be felt in societies in the Middle East, South America, North America and Europe, challenging the thesis of cultural proximity. Does this mean that the Wave is a distinct media phenomenon that can proliferate across culturally distant societies? Has the industrialised, increasingly affluent Asia been a testbed for Korea's globally appealing cultural commodities? Can the notion of cultural proximity be stretched to explore general cultural traits and social experiences of contemporary media consumers in Asia and elsewhere? However, overstretching the notion might result in its loss of analytical capacity. What we are witnessing is the evolving dynamic of the Korean Wave, which is determined by interplays between cultural consumers who have transnational cultural tastes, their media environments that are globally

connected, and Korean cultural industries' capacity to create distinct pop culture genres, styles and contents that have already become quite visible in global cultural flows. The small size of the domestic market, along with high competition, functions as another driving force behind Korean cultural businesses' ambitious outbound strategies, which are compared with Japanese media companies' inward-looking approaches (Kawashima 2018). Korean cultural producers' global dream has been happily supported by the timely popularisation of the Internet and the arrival of online social networks, which provide them with immediate and almost unlimited access to overseas audiences (Jin 2016; Y. Kim 2013). The phenomenal success of Psy's *Gangnam Style* is only one of many such examples.

Today, Korean cultural businesses take 'the global' as a key guiding principle. For them, calling for state protection of the nation's popular culture against global market forces might be a forgotten memory. They are working hard to convert the Korean Wave to a business phenomenon, localising their products in the overseas markets, hiring overseas talent, pursuing international co-production, increasing a company's asset value via proving their artists' global popularity, acquiring foreign investments, and strategically collaborating with foreign media companies. Their global strategy also includes emulating mainstream cultural flows and becoming part of them. They collaborate with Hollywood studios and talent agencies in the United States to better perform in the global cultural market and to increase their visibility in the US market. In turn, the US cultural industries have tried to incorporate the Korean Wave to improve their global strategies as seen from Billboard's recent introduction of 'K-pop' as a new music genre and the creation of a dedicated K-pop page on its website. Netflix's investment in the production of *Okja* (2017), a Korean blockbuster film, and *Love Alarm* (2018, planned) an original Korean drama series based on a popular web-toon in Korea, would be another example showing an encounter of different paths of cultural globalisation.

**Cultural globalisation as national project**

Meanwhile, Korean Wave as 'a policy phenomenon' should be seen as part of the country's attempt to 'actively manage' cultural globalisation by turning it into a national cultural project. To better understand the 'Korean way of globalisation' (G.-W. Shin 2006: 206), one needs to consider the trajectory of the globalisation discourse in public policy discussion in the country. The starting point is that globalisation is not a worldwide, unitary project and there is a variance in its translation, conceptualisation and understanding across different societies. Unlike its translations in China and Taiwan ('全球化', meaning whole-earth-isation) and in Japan ('國際化', meaning internationalisation), its initial Korean translation was '世界化' ('segyehwa', meaning 'make [Korea] like the world') (Lim 2009: 144). While the Chinese and Japanese translations highlight global connectivity and becoming a world society, their Korean equivalence implied Korea's advancement and becoming like the rest of the world (p. 144). It is interesting to know that the discourse was born with the civilian Kim Young-Sam government's (1993-1998) 'segyehwa' drive. Resembling the modernisation project of the Park Chung-Hee government, 'segyehwa' was 'initiated by the government as a state enhancing, top-down strategic plan', which aimed to improve the nation's competitiveness and create a 'new Korea' that would be an active member of the global economic community (S. Kim 2000a: 3; 2000b: 242). Again, like the modernisation push, 'segyehwa' encompassed reform and rationalisation in a vast range of policy areas including diplomacy, security, economic governance, public administration, education, science and technology, information and culture, which were overseen by the presidential Segyehwa Promotion Committee. [3]

Korean policy makers saw globalisation as the nation's transformation – its becoming connected to the rest of the world, adopting international standards and gaining international competitiveness. However, their hasty globalisation policy in economic management, which was centred on liberalisation and deregulation, led to a national crisis in the form of financial meltdown in 1997 (Chang 1998; Lim 2009), and consequently the concept of segyehwa became out of fashion.

[3] See http://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectDescription.do?id=000845&pageFlag for more details of the Segyehwa Promotion Committee and the Kim Young-Sam government's globalisation policy.

When referring to globalisation, Koreans today use the terms of ‘jeonjiguhwa’ (全地球化, or whole-earth-isation) and ‘geullobeollaijeisyeon’ (Korean pronunciation of the English word ‘globalisation’) as well as ‘segyehwa’, the top-down campaign elements of which have now been somewhat weakened. Even though Kim Young-Sam’s globalisation project in the 1990s failed to bring about its promised outcomes, it was an exemplary case that demonstrates how Korea has localised Western discourses and paradigms so these can ultimately assist the nation’s economic development and work as a catalyst for its social transformation.

Korean cultural policy in the 1990s was under the significant influence of Kim Young-Sam’s globalisation drive. The focus was on improving the nation’s ‘cultural competitiveness’ by upgrading Koreans’ cultural life so it could be on a par with that of advanced nations and by ‘globalising quality of life’ (G.-M. Park 2010: 220). As such, globalisation in cultural policy discourse showed strong ‘internal’ orientation and was broadly interpreted as ‘becoming like the rest of the world’ or, in other words, catching up with the existing patron states in the West. It is within this context that Kim Young-Sam’s cultural policy put forward not only ‘cultural industries’ as a new economic sector but also ‘cultural welfare’, especially the expansion of the nation’s cultural infrastructure and enhancement of public cultural enjoyment. Despite the government’s enthusiastic advocacy of globalisation as a new normal, the nationalist and protectionist view of culture prevailed under Kim Young-Sam’s leadership. The most remarkable event was the demolishment of the Jungangcheong building in 1995, which was built by the Japanese coloniser as government-general hall and had thus far been used as Korea’s government hall. Its removal was the most de-colonising moment in the country’s cultural history since 1945. When it came to cultural diplomatic efforts, the government’s main concern was the traditional type of international cultural exchange, such as Korean cultural organisations’ participation in international festivals and fairs and the country’s hosting of international cultural events. Without state support for cultural export, broadcasters and TV production companies had to find a way to enter overseas markets by themselves.

The next president, Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2003), did not inherit the 'segyehwa' discourse. He advocated a progressive vision of 'universal globalisation'. This notion, which is similar to what Arjun Appadurai calls 'globalisation from below' (2005), referred to the globalisation of freedom, human rights, justice, peace and equity (Lim 2009: 146). At the same time, his government implemented neoliberal economic reform that resulted in the opening up of Korean markets to foreign firms and the integration of Korean economy to the global financial market. The coexistence of 'globalisation from above' and 'globalisation from below' in President Kim Dae-Jung's understanding of Korea's relation to the world appeared to be a manifestation of the inconsistency existing in his third-way politics (J.-E. Chung 2012; Lim 2009), between a market economy and democracy, and between neoliberal economic policy and progressive social policy.

Although the idea of 'globalisation' was not frequently mentioned by his government, it provided an important context for state policy regarding cultural industries and cultural export. If Kim Young-Sam's cultural globalisation policy was inward-looking, the Kim Dae-Jung's policy was notably outbound. The implicit message coded in his policy was that Korea should actively manage cultural globalisation and make best use of it for national economic development. The government's 'New cultural policy' document (1998) offers 'cultural solutions' to Korea's biggest challenge at that time, which was to rebuild the nation and upgrade its economy in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 1997. Cultural export was part of the proposed solutions: the document set an ambitious target that the country would increase cultural exports by 6.5 times in five years (MCT 1998: 13). The government began supporting the overseas promotion of Korean audiovisual products by funding translation, dubbing and subtitling. However, the most crucial event was the creation of the Korea Culture and Content Agency (KOCCA) in 2001, which had a clear mandate to expand the country's cultural exports. From its inception, this agency invested heavily on showcasing Korean popular cultural products abroad and facilitated cultural export by funding, providing market information and legal advice, and organising events where cultural companies could meet potential investors.

Overseas cultural promotion and export support were established firmly as an essential component of the country's cultural (content) industries policy and their weight has grown over time (also see Chapter 5).

**Korean Wave as a policy phenomenon**

The rising Korean Wave, especially the phenomenal success of the TV drama series *Winter Sonata* in Japan in early 2000s, made policy makers more confidently envision cultural, economic and diplomatic benefits of the global reach of the country's pop culture. Soon, the Korean Wave itself – as a solid proof of culture's economic utility – was made a mainstream category of cultural policy, connecting commercial cultural business to diplomacy, nation branding, tourism, export, regional development and numerous areas of public policy. The country began to feel an emerging sense of 'cultural confidence', which most Koreans – policy makers, cultural producers, media professionals and members of the public alike – had lacked in recent history, where a sense of cultural crisis prevailed and culture was seen as something to be preserved and safeguarded from colonial legacies, Western cultural hegemony and vulgar commercialism. Dramatically departing from protectionism, Korea's cultural policy began to perceive cultural globalisation as a vital condition for the prosperity of local cultural businesses and talents and a potential source of positive spill-over effects in other economic sectors.

A good example demonstrating the decline of cultural protectionism is the liberal Roh Moo-Hyun government's (2003-2008) cultural policy. The first thing to note is its efforts to successfully negotiate with the United State towards a free trade agreement by willingly halving Korea's screen quota from 40% (of all screening days) to 20%. Some commentators think that this was an odd decision because Roh's liberal government was supposed to be 'progressive' and more culture-friendly (e.g., Jin 2014). However, this would be better regarded as an indicator of the end of the old, protectionist rationale of cultural industries policy. In spite of its rhetoric of 'cultural exception' and

'diversity', the government persistently advocated the necessity for a screen quota cut for the sake of practical benefits such as diplomacy, a trade deal with United States and the nation's economic growth (W.-J. Lee 2004: 227).

Another aspect of his cultural policy is the consolidation of economism. In its early days, the government took a rather cautious approach to the Korean Wave, expecting it to serve as a potential catalyst for transnational cultural dialogue, the development of North East Asian culture and increased cultural collaboration within the Asian region (MCT 2004). A new agency called Korea Foundation for Asian Cultural Exchange (KOFACE)[4] was set up in 2003 under the aegis of the cultural ministry to compensate for the economic orientation of KOCCA's programmes, foster collaboration among Asian cultural industries, and manage the ongoing and potential backlash toward the Korean Wave in some Asian countries, for example, the rise of cultural protectionism in China and Taiwan and the anti-Korea sentiment in Japan. The Roh government's repackaging of Korean traditional culture in its 'Han (Korean) style' brand project was another attempt to tone down the expansionist drive in the Korean Wave policy and, at the same time, incorporate traditional cultural elements into the policy (K. Hong 2014). This project, which encompassed Korean alphabet, food, architecture, music and traditional paper, failed to establish a strong 'han-' brand but certainly broadened the scope of the policy beyond pop culture.

However, the Roh government's cautious approach to the Korean Wave was overruled by its global ambition (MCT 2005a, 2005b). Its proposal of three objectives of cultural policy – Korea's becoming a world top five cultural powerhouse, a tourist hub in Northeast Asia and a world top ten leisure sports power – clearly indicated the Korean understanding of cultural globalisation as the country's rapid catching-up with culturally advanced economies:

[4] As the Korean Wave was spreading beyond Asia, the foundation was renamed the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE). Although it funds and organises cultural exchange programmes, its activities today are clearly oriented towards supporting the Korean Wave. This shows that it is extremely difficult to separate international cultural exchange from the increasingly powerful, overarching framework of the Korean Wave.

> Making Korea *one of the world['s] top five cultural powerhouses* by 2010 by providing state-level systematic and comprehensive support and thus securing advantages in competition with advanced economies […] Managing the discomfort against the Korean Wave in parts of Asia and spreading the Korean Wave globally by strengthening national brand power (MCT 2005b: 19, emphasis added).

The policy's economism was deepened by the conservative president Lee Myung-Bak (2008-2013) who took the Korean Wave as an effective means of nation branding that was a presidential agenda. Within the government's expansionist and evangelist perspective, the Korean Wave was firmly established as a global project, the mission of which was to spread Korean culture to every corner of the world. The government tried to unify the identity and cultural images of Korea under the cool brand 'K' and included almost all areas with which the cultural ministry is concerned, except religion (H.-K. Lee 2013). Believing that many areas of 'K-culture', such as K-fine art, K-musical, K-literature and K-food, could join the Wave, the cultural ministry announced a comprehensive 'Korean Wave Development Strategy' under which a range of traditional and contemporary cultural sectors would benefit from financial, managerial and marketing support from the central government and its agencies. The strategy assumed that 'developing both traditional and contemporary culture will lead to economic affluence; converging traditional culture and advanced technology will help Korea to attract the world' (Lee Myung-Bak cited in MCST 2012b). Traditional culture was imagined as a cultural resource that could be exploited for the creation of added values, tourism and nation branding. The instrumental usefulness of contemporary arts was also emphasised: by improving foreign audiences' understanding of Korea's contemporary arts, the backlashes to the commercially-driven Korean Wave could be alleviated, 'K-content' could be diversified and, therefore, the country could 'avoid following the footstep of Hong Kong's popular culture, which relied too much on film and lost its regional and global appeal soon after its heyday' (MCST 2012b).

'K-culture' is an ambivalent signifier, where the country's cultural nationalism takes an outlook of globalism and the essentialist perspective of culture is fused with the logic of industrial

production and export (KCIS 2012; MCST 2013b). The industrial logic tends to reduce Korean society to 'the country of origin' of finished cultural products for export. Korea's cultural connections to other societies and its active appreciation of various cultures from abroad are made sense of in this logic, leaving little scope for pondering and discoursing the growing hybridisation and diversification of Korean culture itself (K. Lee 2008; Ryoo 2009; Shim 2006). Instead, Korean contemporary culture, regardless of its genealogy, is frequently understood from an essentialist perspective as reflecting the Korean nation's deep-rooted characteristics and spirit. In the age when the idea 'national culture' no longer has its efficacy, the Korean Wave provides policy makers with a framework, in which they can articulate the nation's cultural confidence and their desire to 'expand Korea's cultural territory' by supporting cultural exports and nation branding (MCTS 2015).

The government's Korean Wave policy has grown very quickly, resulting in a comprehensive package of plans, funding, investment, events, training, market research and marketing, branding exercises, fandom research, consultation, showcasing, networking, and so on. Its outgrowth means that it now offers an overarching vision and goal for existing sub-sections of cultural policy, such as content industries and creative economy policies, encouraging the country's creative content makers, storytellers, cultural SMEs and 1-person creative businesses think big and target overseas markets (also see Chapter 5). In this sense, the Korean Wave is a powerful pedagogic discourse that instils in the country's cultural producers global mind-sets and ambitions and assists them in developing a new subjectivity as global cultural players. In doing so, the discourse of the Korean Wave works as an effective catalyst for Korea's outbound cultural globalisation and post-industrial social transformation.

**'Post-cultural' Korean Wave and policy convergence**

The boundaries of the Korean Wave policy have continuously been broadened as policy makers believe that the Wave can generate multiple benefits across different sectors and industries. The

mapping of the policy at the central government level is a good way to observe the convergence across cultural promotion, diplomacy, cultural and non-cultural exports, tourism and other economic activities. The policy is populated by a number of ministries all of which claim their share in the Korean Wave: cultural ministry (overseas promotion and export of K-culture), foreign ministry (export support and cultural diplomacy utilising the Korean Wave), the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning (culture-ITC convergence, support for K-pop hologram theatres and export support), trade ministry (nation branding, Korean Wave expo and export support) and agricultural ministry (K-food) (KOFICE 2015). While duplicating policy actions, these ministries and their agencies are also collaborating, increasing the weight of the Korean Wave as a cross-government policy agenda.

One of the industries that have been hugely affected by the Korean Wave is the tourism industry. Seeing the Wave as a saviour of the inbound tourism industry, the government's key strategies have targeted Asian countries, especially China, which is the biggest and fastest growing tourist market with nearly 6 million Chinese visitors (over 45% of all visitors) in 2015.[5] Observing that affluent major cities on the east coast of China are already familiar with Korean contemporary culture and, thus, are mature markets for Korean products, policy makers are hoping to bring the Korean Wave to the 'Western Frontiers' of China by implementing dedicated efforts in its western cities (KWPC 2015). For instance, the cultural ministry has decided that the focal point should be Chungching City where a K-culture flagship store will be built soon and a series of promotional events will be organised.

The national framework of tourism policy itself has been rebranded as part of the Korean Wave policy and the prefix 'K-' permeates various schemes: 'K-smile campaign', 'K-travel' (transport between Seoul and regions), 'K-tour card' (travel card targeted at Chinese visitors) and so on. Even visa rules have been loosened so Chinese tourists whose purpose of visit is related to the Korean Wave (e.g., K-pop concert, fashion, beauty and cultural experience) can enter the country

[5] The statistics were generated via Korea Culture & Tourism Institute's Tourism Knowledge Information System. http://know.tour.go.kr/stat/tourStatSearchDis.do;jsessionid=462A76015A8B2069C3BCF53B68F6AAB7 (accessed on 20 June 2017).

with less bureaucracy (MCST 2016d). More recently, the government has pushed the boundary of the Korean Wave to include shopping in its agenda. To boost the 'Korea Grand Sale' event targeted at shoppers from affluent Asian societies, the cultural ministry organises a K-culture fair as part of its annual 'cultural month' (October), reorienting the cultural month that has thus far focused on non-commercial arts and culture. The Korean Wave, tourism and shopping are further blended as some talent agencies managing Korean Wave stars began collaborating with big corporations to bid for licenced duty free shops at tourist hot spots.

The Korean Wave, as a post-industrial economic strategy, has also fed into regeneration projects at local levels. Unlike the Western experience of culture-led urban renaissance projects that rely on 'arts' events and facilities (e.g., European Capital of Culture programme), the relative lack of arts consumption in Korea (as of 2016, 12.8%, 4.5% and 73.3% of the adult population went to art exhibitions, classical music concerts and cinemas respectively) means that local regeneration schemes are keener to capitalise on the country's vibrant pop culture (MCST 2017). This was firstly triggered by the sudden influx of Japanese fans of *Winter Sonata*, the popular TV drama series, to the shooting locations such as Chuncheon and Nami Island in the mid-2000s. It was promptly followed by many attempts to revitalise local economies by building a Korean Wave hot spot regardless of prior connection to pop culture production or tourism. The frequently attempted formula is to construct tourist destinations, Korean Wave symbols, and shopping and residential facilities, but these do not necessarily reflect local cultural identities or traditions. Such a strategy can easily fail as it relies on a naïve assumption that the motif of the Korean Wave would successfully attract private investors and tourists; consequently, the reality is that several such plans have been cancelled or delayed due to funding and management issues (H.-K. Lee 2013).

The most notorious case is Hallyu World (formerly Hallyuwood), an ambitious mega project that was initiated by Gyonggi Province in 2005. It originally proposed constructing a Korean Wave-themed park, a K-pop arena, a large-scale aquarium, broadcasting facilities, entertainment venues,

hotels, shopping malls and residential and commercial facilities in Goyang City, which previously had nothing to do with pop culture production. The project's intention was to create a mecca for the Korean Wave, integrating cultural production, consumption, tourism, broadcasting, digital content and shopping. Its expected benefits (increased production worth 32.8 trillion won or USD 2.8 billion for 20 years; 420,000 jobs) were thought to easily exceed the required cost (6 trillion won or USD 5.12 billion) (Hankyoreh 2015). However, it had been postponed for the past ten years because of the economic recession and financial problems. The project seemed to be alive again when the presidential Cultural Prosperity Committee announced its resurrection in 2015 by saying that it would be rebranded as 'K-Culture Valley' and be proceeded by a consortium led by CJ Group, one of Korea's conglomerates (Kyungkyang Shinmum 2016). Yet its future is still uncertain as many policy decisions made by the Park Geun-Hye government including the K-Culture Valley project are suspected for their link to her abuse of power and are being investigated by prosecutors. Hallyu World is emblematic of the trend that the Korean Wave has become a popular post-industrial strategy of local economic development, which is driven by (local) political, economic and financial motivations rather than cultural considerations.

As the predicament of the Hallyu World project demonstrates, local tourism and regeneration projects themed with the Korean Wave appear quite risky ventures with questionable benefits for local residents because they involve speculative investments that are conscious of trends in the real estate market and deal with multiple commercial actors who have dissimilar vested interests. Still, the Korean Wave is an attractive motif that local governments are eager to exploit when an opportunity arises. For instance, the pan-Asian popularity of *The Descendants of the Sun* (2016), a military romance drama for TV, motivated Taebaek City (Gangwon Province) to announce a plan to exploit its connection to the drama – some parts of which were shot in a set located in the city – to boost local economy by attracting Chinese and Asian visitors (Yonhap News 2016). While Taebaek's post-industrial strategy tries to tap into its superficial connection to the K-drama and fabricate the

city's cultural identity, what is forgotten and disregarded is its industrial heritage and socio-cultural identity as a former mining town, which played pivotal roles during the nation's economic catch-up period.

The economic implications of the Korean Wave are not limited to tourism and regional regeneration as it has become a universal nation brand and export strategy for all Korean manufacturers and service providers. Nation branding locates nation states in an international market environment, where states compete for symbolic capital such as positive recognition and brand identity, which can turn into economic competitiveness in the form of increased inward investment, growth of foreign tourist income and additional exports. Making 'the nation matter in a world where borders and boundaries appear increasingly obsolete' (Aronczyk 2013: 3), the Korean Wave policy seeks to actively take advantage of globalisation by extending the cool images of the nation's pop culture to everything that the country can export. From this perspective, the cultural ministry argues that the pervasiveness of the 'K' brand signals the arrival of the post-cultural 'Korean Wave 3.0' which differs from early versions that focused on TV dramas and K-pop:

> K-culture, a keyword for the era of the Korean Wave 3.0, encompasses all of traditional culture, the arts, and cultural contents. If the existing Korean Wave was oriented to cultural contents and part of the arts, K-culture includes traditional culture and shows the organic interrelation among the above three components. Furthermore, K-culture goes beyond the sphere of culture. It wishes to share with the world *everything that signifies Korea*, or 'the Korean' that is the base for traditional culture, the arts and cultural contents. […] the Korean Wave is a cultural phenomenon but, at the same time, it is *post-cultural*. In terms of government's division of labour, it is not only a remit of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism but also a pan-government responsibility (MCST 2013b: 22-23, emphasis added).

'Korean Wave 3.0' or 'post-cultural' Korean Wave, in practice, focuses on lending a brand identity to SMEs and locally based companies to give them visibility in overseas markets. Witnessing the Korean Wave's positive impacts on SMEs' exports, the government urges them to take full advantage of the positive image of the 'K' brand.

It is within this context that the cultural and industry ministries have co-organised the annual Korea Brand and Entertainment Expos abroad, which showcase Korea-made commodities in tandem with the country's pop culture. Recently, the government began calling for more strategic partnership between SMEs and cultural businesses by directly holding workshops to 'teach' how SMEs can develop export strategies capitalising on pop culture and popular idol stars. For instance, under the new slogan 'Converged Korean Wave', the cultural ministry in partnership with the Korea International Trade Association organised a tour of a 'Korean Wave marketing' event across regions to explore various marketing strategies, including product placement in export-oriented audiovisual products and buying out broadcasting time on overseas channels to maximise the synergy with the Korean Wave (MCST 2016c). This line of policy grows even more ambitious to the extent that the government wants to create a 'Korean Wave ecology' by launching a centralised online platform for collaboration between SMEs and entertainment companies. Similarly, pop entertainment events such as K-Convention, Mnet Asian Music Awards and the DMC festival have become fused with export promotion activities where Korean traditional cultural items, ITC products, SME products and cultural technologies are presented and attract potential overseas buyers. As the Korean Wave is believed to be a useful instrument to leverage the upgrading of Korea's export capacity in all sectors, its post-cultural appreciation will intensify, effortlessly exemplifying the Korean style of 'productive' cultural policy.

**Government-industry collaboration**

The corporatist collaboration between the government and businesses was a typical feature of the Korean developmental state, and there are still traces of this tradition in many sectors. However, the rapidly growing partnership between the government and commercial cultural companies today is a new phenomenon that has quickly become a norm. Frequently, neoliberal cultural policy has been discussed in terms of diffusion of power and function of the government and public organisations to

private sector actors and, at a quick glance this is what seems to have happened in the Korean Wave policy. However, a closer look tells us a different story. Instead of decentralising cultural policy, the government's partnership with private sector actors has strengthened the former's top-down and centralised approaches to the Korean Wave while merging public and private sector agendas. Through the relationship, the government accesses useful resources for nation branding, cultural diplomacy and export business whilst cultural companies can gain material and immaterial support from public agencies and can more easily find opportunities for increasing their asset and brand values.

The Korean Wave has opened an unprecedented avenue where the relationship between the government and cultural businesses newly develops. When the country's cultural industries policy expanded in the late 1990s and the 2000s, cultural businesses were a policy object rather than policy partner. However, this relationship transformed with the rise of the Korean Wave and the government's increasing recognition of the roles played by private sector actors in creating attractive pop culture content and their global dissemination. So, it was unsurprising to see the government start working with business conglomerates, broadcasters and entertainment companies in developing policies concerning the Korean Wave. For example, the representatives of big corporations in the export, broadcasting and hospitality businesses (e.g., Hyundai Car, SK, Lotte Hotel, Shinsegae Department Store, Korean Air, Seoul Broadcasting System, etc.) were invited to sit on the Visit Korea Year Committee and the presidential National Brand Committee (Y.-H. Choi 2013). Influential business associations, such as the Federation of Korean Industries, and commercial companies took part in the Korean Wave Support Committee that was set up to actively post-culturalise the Wave for the benefit of business sectors. More recently, this committee was replaced by the Korean Wave Planning Committee, a larger-scale committee that has more executive power, involving six different government ministries, KOCCA, three terrestrial broadcasters, the three largest talent agencies (SM, YG and JYP), CJ E&M (cultural conglomerate), AmorePacific (the country's biggest cosmetic

company), CJ Foodville, Korea Venture Investment Corp., Korea International Trade Association and so on. Corresponding to the cultural ministry's aspiration to 'expand cultural territory' of Korea and leverage the country's export economy (MCST 2015b), this planning committee pursues 'converged Korean Wave' strategies, accelerating the integration of the Korean Wave to exports, SME support, tourism, nation branding and diplomacy.

A notable example of public-private collaboration in Korean Wave promotion is 'SM Town Live World Tour in Paris' (2011), which was organised by SM, one of the three biggest talent agencies in Korea, and was sponsored by the Visit Korea Year Committee, the Korean Cultural Center Paris and the Paris branch of the Korea Tourism Organization. The success of the event was a historical moment in the Korean Wave policy as it convinced policy makers that the Wave could go beyond Asia to become a global phenomenon. Being analogised by the domestic media to Korea's cultural invasion to Europe, the event in Paris triggered London-based fans' flash mob that demanded YG (another big talent agency) to bring its pop idols to London. Yet the flash mob was revealed to have been coordinated by the Korean Cultural Centre in London (Ohmynews 2011). While policy makers were eager to support the Korean Wave, the talent agencies benefited from media coverage and public recognition, which turned into financial gains. SM's share price was greatly boosted by the K-pop sensation in Paris by ten times between 2008 and 2011 and YG successfully floated in the stock market after the London flash mob (D.-Y. Lee 2012). Those talent agencies also attracted capital investment via the Motae Fund's cultural accounts and proved to be very lucrative.[6]

As the economic turn in cultural policy accelerated under Park Geun-Hye's leadership (2013-2017), the collaborative relationship strengthened accordingly. The most noticeable is the exceptionally extensive co-working between the government and CJ Group, one of the Korean chaebols (conglomerates), which used to be part of Samsung group until 1996 and has successfully

[6] According to the cultural ministry, SM has received investments of more than 12 billion won (USD 11.4 million) and YG more than 7.4 billion won (USD 7 million) via the Motae Fund, and their return rates are 437.3% and 823%, respectively as of January 2013 (see H-K. Lee 2013).

developed its entertainment arm, CJ E&M, over the past decade into a powerful media company working across TV, music, film and other cultural businesses. The partnership has occurred in a surprisingly impressive range of policy areas as the following examples from the year 2015 show:

> the representatives of CJ E&M and CJ Foodville (one of the group's food-related companies) sat on the Korean Wave Planning Committee; the Planning Committee, KOCCA and CJ signed an agreement to cooperate in promoting Korean export items at CJ-hosted KCON and Mnet Asian Music Awards; CJ Foodville managed the restaurant at the Korean Pavilion, the Expo Milano (2015) in tandem with the government agenda of the globalisation of 'K-food' (the theme of the Korean Pavilion was 'Hansik (Korean food), food for the future: you are what you eat'); the cultural ministry and public sector actors collaborated with CJ to launch a 'Converged Content Fund'; the K-travel card was introduced via cooperation between the government, CJ and T-money; CJ and Seoul Metropolitan Government co-hosted Culture and Creation Innovation Centre; the president selected a CJ-led consortium to build a K-Culture Valley (previously Hallyu World) in Goyang City to revive the project out of a limbo state; and the cultural ministry opened the Culture and Creation Convergence Centre, one of the flagship facilities that was introduced as core of the country's creative economy policy, at the CJ E&M Centre building in Seoul.[7]

The CJ Group has a track record in producing and exporting Korean pop culture with abundant resources such as media content, platforms, skills and know-how, which the government could access via the partnership. The internal dynamics of the partnership need unpicking but it can be seen as an extension of the government's policy capacity as well as its absorption of private sector perspectives. The consequence is the centralisation rather than decentralisation of the Korean Wave policy while public and private sector agendas overlap. In this regard, an interesting example is the cultural ministry and KOCCA's collaboration with CJ in organising the annual 'Crazy Camp', where participants developed creative and innovative ideas for new cultural productions and businesses under close mentorship and support from KOCCA and CJ. One of the benefits for the competition winners at the Camp 2014 was that they would be favoured when applying for a job at CJ. This was

[7] I have identified these examples of the ministry-CJ collaboration by reading relevant news reports and the ministry's publications.

a small-scale scheme but it aptly exemplifies how the country's cultural industries policy is assisted by skills and resources offered by big cultural businesses.

CJ's exceptional willingness to support state cultural policy was speculated to be related to its weak position vis-à-vis the government as its head was serving a prison sentence and the conglomerate might have been motivated to signal its active support for the government, hoping for his early release. However, recent findings indicate more complicated political factors behind the conglomerate's heavy involvement in the policy: President Park Guen-Hye, who was unhappy about the so-called 'leftist' films produced by CJ, heavily pressured it to the extent that it 'voluntarily' supported government initiatives and produced 'patriotic' films (Hankyoreh21 2017). As the prosecutors are investigating Park's abuse of power at the time of writing, the exact nature of the above collaboration is yet to be disclosed. What is known at this moment is that the partnership was driven by complex political as well as economic motivations while the 'culture war' (see Chapter 4) was extended by Park Geun-Hye's conservatism to the Korean Wave (and content industries) policy that had thus far been insulated from party politics thanks to the depoliticising effect of Korean society's economic consensus of culture (see Chapter 5).

The increasing dominance of the Korean Wave in cultural policy means that the government is in more need for borrowing capacities and resources of private sector actors in order to be engaged further with and mobilise the Wave. Through working with a small number of large-scale and resourceful cultural corporations such as CJ, YG and Naver (the nation's biggest online portal), policy makers can centrally manage the partnership and instantly increase their implementational capacity. This appears to be a Korean style of privatisation of statist cultural policy. Since the recent revelation of the ideological motivations behind the government-CJ relationship, CJ has been depicted as a powerless victim by news reports whereas there is still an absence of inquiries into how the emerging alliance between the government and big media corporations which are in a dominant position in their sector influence and potentially reorient cultural policy.

**Korean Wave policy and overseas fandom**

The Korean Wave has broadened the arena of cultural policy by motivating the government and public agencies to directly engage with not only cultural businesses but also overseas fans of Korean pop culture. Here, we should be reminded of the fact that the Korean Wave as a cultural phenomenon was created and has been driven by enthusiastic overseas consumers and fans of Korean pop music, TV drama, film and so on. Beyond being consumers, they are a valuable proof of the Korean Wave success as well as Korea's potential cultural ambassadors. This motivates policy makers to closely monitor fan activities and devise policy measures to involve fans in the promotion of the Korean Wave. This results in unprecedented and intriguing proximity between cultural policy and cultural fandom.

It is interesting to observe that Korean policy makers' perception of pop culture consumers has dramatically changed over time. Using Gabriel and Lang's (2006) typology of manifold faces of consumers, we can say that they were firstly regarded as 'potential victims' who were in need of government guidance and teaching (until the 1980s) and then 'choosers' and 'identity-seekers', who enjoyed the products of the booming cultural industries and developed articulated tastes for pop culture content (1990s). In recent years, cultural consumers began to be more positively perceived as empowered, participatory cultural agents who passionately consume cultural texts, produce their own meanings and recreate the given texts by applying their own creativity. The popular discourse of 'active users', 'prosumers' and 'collective intellect' has been fully embraced by Korean policy makers (KOCIS 2012):

> The development of advanced technologies and the decline of their cost have led to the birth of 'collective intellect'. Collective intellect clearly differs from the existing knowledge classes in terms of their inclusion of a wide range of social strata. Collective intellect advances, monitoring and checking the powerful such as nation states, businesses and media. […] culture that does not communicate with collective intellect cannot help demising (KOCIS 2012: 15).

The endorsement of the cultural power of consumers can be viewed as a natural extension of the value-neutral and postmodern perspective of content industries held by Korean cultural policy makers (see Chapter 5). As both policy makers and experts no longer determine the values and merits of individual cultural products, it is consumers who are the ultimate judges. With the transfer and diffusion of cultural authority, overseas popularity and fandom are treated as an important source of legitimacy of Korean pop culture and its aesthetics. Foreign fans are regarded as competent and knowledgeable cultural arbiters, and their easy and immediate access to the country's cultural products is an important issue for both policy makers and cultural businesses. This is why the latter are carefully negotiating with – instead of taking immediate preventative actions against – unauthorised file sharing and downloading by fans, which is one of the most popular and convenient routes in which global fans access Korean popular culture.

As discussed elsewhere (H.-K. Lee 2013), what happened to *Right Now*, a song Psy released in 2010, is very telling. Seeing the global sensation of *Gangnam Style* in autumn 2012, some Korean online users anticipated that *Right Now* would be the next global hit as the number of views of its YouTube video was rising and overseas fans left positive comments. However, access to the video was limited as it was graded as 'R19' by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which had the authority to regulate cultural content that could harm young people, due to its strong language. Online users began severely criticising the ministry's conservative standards and blamed it for overseas fans' limited access to the video (Chosun Ilbo 2012). The prevailing view was that 'the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family [itself] was a hindrance to the Korean Wave' with its policy hampering Psy's songs from reaching foreign audiences. Consequently, it was argued, Psy's career as a global pop singer was damaged. Under serious pressure from online users, the ministry quickly decided to lift the restriction from the song and other R-graded songs. There had previously been criticism of the ministry's conservative criteria but they did not attract public attention. Only with

Psy's success as a K-pop star, censorship became an issue of market access and global exposure of Korean talents, showing both Korean policy makers' and online users' embrace of transnational consumerism. This incident has affirmed the hegemony of the Korean Wave over 'politics of society', where the debate on the restricted access to certain songs potentially offers the public an opportunity to examine the issues of freedom of expression and child protection against the shifting cultural and social conditions of the country.

With the ambitious, and even aggressive, expansion of the Korean Wave policy, the boundaries between policy, cultural business, diplomacy and fandom are becoming ever more fluid. Global fandom of Korean culture has already become a cross-ministry agenda, leading to an abundance of government-led monitoring and market research. The two key actors are the Korea Foundation and the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE). KOFICE, which was set up by the cultural ministry to promote Asian and international cultural exchange, takes the Korean Wave as its core mission and plays a key role in intelligence gathering in this area, including the publication of the annual *Korean Wave White Paper*, biweekly *Global Hallyu Issue* and the quarterly *Hallyu Now*. The Korean Foundation under the foreign ministry, which previously concentrated on the international promotion of Korean studies, traditional culture and fine arts, extended its diplomatic remit to the Korean Wave and has annually published the *Global Village Korean Wave Report* since 2012. Take, for example, the ambitious *Global Village* report of 2015 with almost 1,000 pages, surveying 105 countries and providing the following overview of the global fandom of Korean pop culture:

> A survey of 105 countries has found that there are 1,493 Korean Wave fan communities in 86 countries. The fan communities have 35,590,000 members as of December 2015. […] In terms of region, there are 310 communities (approximately 26,200,000 members) in Asia and Oceania, 804 communities (approximately 7,580,000 members) in America, 306 communities (approximately 1,620,000 members) in Europe and 73 communities (approximately 170,000 members) in Africa (Korea Foundation 2015: 6).

The report finds that different forms and genres of Korean pop culture enjoy popularity in different countries, proposing more targeted approaches to cultural exports worldwide. Similarly, the KOFICE publications discuss ongoing trends in surveyed countries and local news coverage on Korean culture, such as the characteristics of the Korean Wave in different religious communities in Asia (Buddhist, Muslim and Catholic) and cultural tastes of different sections of the global cultural market. What is really striking is that cultural and media fandom is now fully incorporated into the Korean Wave policy, where government agencies systematically gather and publish their analysis of global fan communities on a regular basis. Similarly trivial showbiz information as well as financial data (e.g., the trend of share prices of entertainment companies) have become a legitimate part of the Korean Wave intelligence gathering, highlighting the unusual combination of the postmodern, consumerist attitude to culture and the modern, top-down approach to cultural policy making. What makes this unusual combination possible is policy makers' unitary understanding of the Korean Wave as the best instrument of the nation's outward globalisation strategy.

At the same time, the Korean Wave seems to bring excitement and trendy look to the country's efforts in diplomacy and international relations. Since 2012, Official Development Assistance (ODA) targeted at communities in Asia and Africa has incorporated elements of pop culture, and has become part of the Korean Wave policy. One recent example is an ODA in Indonesia (2016), which involved the talent agency YG and focused on dance and vocal training for disadvantaged youth. Another form of ODA is to provide local TV channels with Korean audiovisual programmes for free, cultivating future fans of K-drama. The Korean Wave policy also includes funding collaborative activities among overseas fan groups, inviting active fans to Korea and supporting fans' online broadcasting on Korean culture (KWPC 2015). These programmes along with cultural training programmes (e.g., 'K-pop Academy run by Korea Cultural Centre, London) intend to transform enthusiastic fans to self-nominated cultural ambassadors of Korea and pro-Korean creative entrepreneurs.

The increasing intersection between cultural policy, creative business and fan culture appears to pose challenging questions to the existing fandom research and its typical depiction of fandom as a subcultural field. The research tends to perceive fans as subcultural elites, textual poachers and co-creators whose meaning-making and re-creation activities are increasingly conditioned by digital technologies and online communications on a global scale (Jenkins 2006). Its fundamental concern has been fandom's unsettled relationship with cultural industries in the form of dialectics between its ontological reliance on commercial cultural production on the one hand and its non-commercial – sometimes anti-commercial – pursuits on the other (Hills 2002). Such dialectics is also at the heart of the contemporary debate on active online audiences who contribute creative and personal content to social media platforms: they work as empowered and skilful prosumers, add values to those platforms for free and, at the same time, become commodities for online advertisers. Yet, investigating Korean Wave policy adds another layer of complexity to our understanding of the dialectics of fandom by shedding light on state cultural policy's explicit endeavour to mobilise fan activities and overseas fans' willingness to assume the role of an agent of cultural diplomacy. These fans seemingly view policy elements as part of the attractive package of the Korean Wave. So far, there have been no recognisable events where the cosy relationship between policy and fandom is tested and fans become conscious of inherent tensions between the two crosscurrents in the Korean Wave – cultural and governmental imperatives. This contests our common expectation that fan activities would be subcultural, alternative and potentially subversive and urges us to carefully explore the complex configuration of contemporary transnational cultural fandom, where '(trans)national' becomes a key concern of state cultural policy.

**Pervasiveness of the Korean Wave and everyday cultural life**

In this section, we turn our attention to the Korean government's conscious uses of the Korean Wave as an 'inward' policy strategy. The Korean Wave (or 'K-') is a powerful and popular nation brand,

which speaks to domestic audiences, too. The first thing to notice is that this brand normalises an essentialist and unitary image of the nation, which is distanced from the convoluted reality where its culture and cultural identity are continuously contested and reconstructed. A similar example is found in Japan. 'Cool Japan', the country's nation branding and cultural diplomacy strategy, promotes its culture to overseas audiences and facilitating international cultural exchanges whilst disregarding cultural and ethnic diversity within Japanese society, for example the existence of minority communities including approximately 900,000 Japanese residents who are Korean descendants and the increasing number of migrants (MOFA 2013). In a way, such disconnection is inevitable as the singular nation brand has too little scope to express the rich and complex cultural formation of Japanese society.

This is the case with the Korean Wave policy too. There has been a continuous influx of immigrants and migrants, primarily from less developed Asian societies, since the 1990s and, as of 2015, there are approximately 1.3 million foreigners over the age of fifteen (including marriage immigrants and migrant workers, excluding foreign students) in Korea (Statistics Korea 2015). Yet, the Korean Wave policy never takes into account the diversified cultural profile within Korea and the roles the new members of society play in both complicating and enriching its contemporary culture. Overall, policy makers take a schizophrenic perspective of foreigners/outsiders within Korea (H.-K. Lee 2018). On the one hand, it wholeheartedly welcomes affluent tourists and tech-savvy global fans of Korean pop culture as empowered, sovereign consumers. On the other hand, those marriage immigrants and their family members tend to be seen as a subject for cultural inclusion and assimilation in the framework of family and population policies mainly administered by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. Meanwhile, migrant workers are treated as temporary labour rather than members of society. Between transnational consumerism, integrationist population management and purely economy-centric approaches to migration, multiculturalism hardly takes root in Korean

cultural policy. After all, cultural diversity is a phenomenon too complicated to neatly fit with the unitary – and cool – nation brand of Korea.

Although it is disconnected from society's internal cultural conditions, Korean Wave has become a means of implicit cultural policy and public education that relies on and utilises the Korean public's identification with and internalisation of the projected cool nation brand. The public are invited to live the nation brand 'K', ultimately contributing to its success. They eat 'K-food' and drink 'K-water' (the new name of Korea Water Resource Corporation, the country's public water provider). They are encouraged to join the 'K-smile' campaign led by the Visit Korea Committee and young jobseekers are recruited by the Korea Tourism Organization to be trained to become a 'K-culture' travel guide. The K brand is further stretched to be associated even with Korean reunification, the nation's most complicated political agenda, and provides it with an unexpectedly trendy – and depoliticising – look: e.g., 'One K' (meaning unified Korea) was the title of a concert co-organised by the government, political parties and several pop stars in 2015 to celebrate the 70$^{th}$ anniversary of national independence. The savvy and cool brand of 'K' is co-created, circulated, affirmed and reproduced by public sector actors, domestic and international media as well as overseas fans of Korean pop culture. Today the prefix 'K' is associated with almost everything in, from and about Korea, creating an environment where Koreans feel and live the brand in their everyday life.

Despite the emerging discontent with its saturation and brand fatigue, the Korean Wave came to serve as an effective communication channel for a surprisingly vast range of public policy agendas, from health, mental health, law enforcement, entrepreneurship, start-up businesses and financial reform. President Park Geun-Hye's comments on the internationally popular TV drama series *The Descendants of the Sun* (2016) are revealing. According to the KBS news (2016), she stressed that successful cultural content such as this drama not only generates economic and cultural values but it can also contribute to public policies. She continued to say that this drama could have featured 'long-

distanced health services' that the government was championing and 'part-time work', which would alleviate the career interruption of female workers, so that those policy agenda could be effectively communicated to the public. She called for more public support for such useful cultural contents.

In a similar vein, many public policy makers intend to maximise the impact of their policy messages by involving pop stars and idols associated with the Korean Wave; it has quickly become a norm that those stars and idols endorse and advocate nation branding and export-related organisations/initiatives such as international sports events, Korea Brand & Entertainment Expos, Incheon International Airport (which currently is a public corporation), King Sejong Institutes and the Creative Korea campaign. Various government departments and their agencies, too, seek out Korean Wave effects by inviting pop stars as ambassadors for their activities, such as e-government and government 3.0 (Ministry of the Interior), the provision of national statistics (Statistics Korea), law enforcement (Ministry of Law) and taxation (National Tax Service). Stars are involved in public policy campaigns from traffic safety, mental health, emergency medical treatment, youth support, stop-smoking campaigns and even to Korean reunification and general elections. Sometimes a noticeable schism emerges between the projected image and the real life of the stars, invalidating the policy messages. For example, a member of 2NE1, a globally popular female idol group who were invited to advocate 'law and order' by the Ministry of Law in 2010, was accused of drug smuggling and generated negative media coverage. Despite the backlash, public sector organisations continued to regard the Korean Wave and associated idols as an invaluable cultural resource they can easily tap into to generate public and media attention and disseminate their messages more persuasively.

As inter-textually appealing commodities, Korean pop stars and idols saturate the country's audiovisual culture, from TV dramas, TV entertainment shows, music programmes on TV and radio, film to advertisements on various media outlets and, of course, social media. By collaborating with the government and public sector actors, they transgress from the field of entertainment to that of politics and public policy to become a kind of public resource, diversifying their already multifaceted

identity. The above campaigns rely on the feeling of intimacy, familiarity and excitement that the stars and idols convey to the public, especially young-generation Koreans. In tandem with the government's ambition to nurture a 'creative economy' fuelled by SMEs and start-ups, public agencies dealing with self-employment, entrepreneurship, business and finance are keen to capitalise on the positive, active and young images of K-pop stars, who are highly praised by domestic and overseas fans as 'hardworking', 'being thankful and focusing on positive things', 'never giving up their dreams' and 'consistent hard work and dedication', which are important constituents of an ideal self in contemporary Korea.[8]

Notably, web-drama, which normally consists of a few short episodes of ten minutes or so, has quickly emerged as a genre preferred by policy makers due to its briefness, narrative-centred format and easy accessibility for young Internet users. An interesting case is *Choco Bank* (2016), a web-drama series commissioned by the Financial Services Commission, the financial regulator in Korea. The drama was produced to advocate the government's 'financial reform', especially the introduction of new financial services and technologies, featuring a Korean Wave idol (Kai from the idol group EXO, which has a huge domestic and global fandom) and an experienced young actress. The Financial Services Commission states that the drama is an 'info-romance' web-drama that explains some of the core elements of the country's financial reform:

> This drama offers both information and fun by using product placement to explain the financial reform FSC is currently putting forward, such as crowd funding, ISA, online insurance comparison, current account transfer and fin-tech [finance technology] simple payment (FSC 2016).

The six episodes focus on two characters: Choco, a cute woman who runs a chocolate shop and Bank, a young and handsome man who has struggled for five years to get a job in the commercial banking industry. Choco and Bank meet accidentally, and Bank starts working at the chocolate shop. Using

[8] For example, see an article '8 things that we can learn from our K-pop idols', at http://www.hellokpop.com/list/8-things-that-we-can-learn-from-our-k-pop-idols/ (accessed on 13 June 2017). The article also lists 'respecting their seniors', 'being proud of their nationality' and 'practice, practice and practice'.

his good knowledge of financial products, he provides free financial advice to the shop's customers and becomes well known. Eventually, he finds a job in the banking industry and the two protagonists admit their love. While following the formula of a romantic comedy, the series offers the audience information on the new financial products mentioned above. Thanks to Kai's popularity and the romantic storyline, it has attracted a lot of attention both domestically and internationally. A similar approach was adopted by the non-profit National Credit Union Federation of Korea, which commissioned a web-drama series *Tomorrow Boy* (2016) that has proven popular since it was released on an internet portal. In this series, an idol star plays the role of high-school student who is the hardworking bread winner for his family and receives helpful financial advice from a manager of the federation. Certainly, Korean policy makers regard web-drama as a brand-new tool for disseminating financial information and skills among young generations in their late teens, twenties and thirties.

One of the popular themes that public sector organisations try to address casting Korean Wave stars is self-employment and start-up businesses. Reflecting the harsh economic reality that young-generation Koreans face, web-dramas funded by these agencies often feature the unemployed, the self-employed and those running a micro business. These young people are portrayed as pursuing their dream, hardworking, fighting the feelings of anxiety and insecurity, overcoming challenges, and trying to become resilient, self-confident and hopeful. The protagonists gain advice and support from their mentors, friends, neighbours and, importantly, public sector agencies. By the end of the dramas, they have learned lessons on how to manage their life and survive the post-industrial economy characterised by economic recession, unemployment and the lack of social welfare provision. For instance, the web-drama series *Dreaming CEO* (2014) funded by the Small and Medium Business Administration under the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy features a young CEO of a small start-up that created and manages an app: he pursues his dream despite financial and business challenges and finally seeks advice from the above public agency. It is overt that the agency's

intention is to promote entrepreneurship and raise the young generations' attention to business opportunities, casting members of pop idol groups. Its messages are witty and neatly packaged in the typical format of enjoyable romantic comedies.

Interestingly, public policy messages for the young generations are complemented and reinforced by those from private sector actors who create glossy web-drama series and so-called 'public interest campaigns'. Samsung's endeavour in this area is notable. Since 2013, this chaebol has produced a series of popular and well-made web-dramas every year: *Perpetual Motion Machine* (*Muhandongnyeok*, 2013), *The Future of the Best* (*Choegoui mirae*, 2014), *Fancying the Challenge* (*Dojeone banhada*, 2015) and *The Positive Personality* (*Geungjeongyi chejil*, 2016). These series portrays the tough realities of young jobseekers (for example, those who want to enter the financial sector, get a stable job, want to become an idol star, start up a one-person business or become a film director) and the hindrances young employees of Samsung should overcome in order to pursue their passion. Over the course of the series, these young people who are played by K-pop idols or K-drama stars learn to negotiate with their challenges, identify sources of support and try their best to turn their dreams into reality.

The above web-dramas constitute an intriguing field of cultural production and consumption. They provide K-pop idols with an opportunity to easily debut as actors and develop their acting career without taking a serious risk, and offer drama producers and writers to accumulate skills and test market tastes. In addition, the dramas themselves have become a part of the Korean Wave, attracting overseas viewers. Mixing up public policy campaign, entertainment and organisational PR, they generate highly polysemic cultural texts. While there might be viewers who empathise with the characters in the dramas and learn moral lessons, other viewers might see them as pure entertainment, focusing on good-looking stars and entertaining storylines. Nevertheless, the public policy messages in the dramas seem to feed into the grand narrative of 'the youth' in contemporary Korea that enduring hardship and distress is a conduit for young people's personal growth and survival strategy.

The messages coded for young-generation Koreans are likely to be lost in translation when they transgress national borders while stars and their entertaining values are ardently appreciated by global fans. For most overseas fans, these dramas might be an extension of Korea's trendy TV drama or K-pop music videos and an opportunity that opens up a new phase for their chosen star's multifaceted career, which they happily support.

Whereas we do not know how successful the above campaigns have been in encouraging Koreans to make themselves better prepared to survive and prosper in the neoliberal and post-industrial economy, there are cases where young people develop an ideal self within the framework of globalising Korean culture. Here, the discourse of Korean Wave offers a space where young Koreans relate themselves – as self-appointed cultural ambassadors of the nation – to the world and test their creativity and talents within international settings. Beyond the top-down public or corporate campaigns, a newly emerging trend is that ambitious young people, mostly in their twenties, pursue personal development and self-actualisation by self-teaching organisational and problem-solving skills and looking for business opportunities within the framework of the Korean Wave. For example, groups of young people self-organise very extensive overseas tours where they cook and showcase Korean food such as Bibimbap and Kimchi for local people in order to 'globalise hansik (Korean food)'.[9] Similarly, there are groups of young volunteers who travel abroad to introduce Korean culture such as traditional music, dance and calligraphy to global audiences.[10] Their activities are normally sponsored by commercial companies, public corporations and/or public agencies.

But what distinguishes them from conventional types of nation branding, cultural diplomacy or public policy campaigns is the self-motivation, passion and genuine excitement that those young people bring with them. Obviously, there are no traces of top-down policy or overt logic of the

[9] The most famous example is Bibimbap Backpackers, which is a group of young volunteers who have promoted Korean food abroad by touring many countries since 2011. For their activities, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssEZMHMLbvY (accessed on 1 April 2017).

[10] Arirang Yurangdan, which is a private diplomacy organisation consisting of young volunteers, is such an example. This group has toured 16 countries (30 cities) to introduce Korean traditional music, calligraphy and dance for the purpose of cultural diplomacy and cultural education. https://ko-kr.facebook.com/ArirangYurangdan/ (accessed on 1 April 2017).

market here. Those young volunteers happily and willingly provide free labour and creative input to the Korean Wave. In their own narratives and media coverage, the success of the Korean Wave is described in terms of their adventure, self-realisation, learning new skills and exploring new opportunities. Yet, the narratives do not necessarily reflect on the evangelical and missionary zeal conveyed in their activities: why Korean food should be tasted and Korean traditional culture be globally recognised. Between the policy discourse of the Korean Wave and the personal story of having global, life-changing experience, there proliferates a 'cool' sense of nationalism, which is packaged with voluntarism, self-organisation, risk-taking, youth culture and globalism. Hence, it is not an irony that the more global and entrepreneurial those activities are, the more national their achievements are deemed.

**Conclusion**

As Gi-Wook Shin (2009: 252) claims, it appears that Koreans see no inherent contradiction between nationalism and globalisation. Although the politically loaded idea of 'national culture' has lost its currency in cultural policy discussion since the 1990s (see Chapter 4), Korean Wave as a policy phenomenon has been led by a clear national agenda. 'Korean Wave' is an attractive replacement for 'national culture' in the sense that it offers Koreans a new vocabulary to articulate 'the national' in the age of its demise and reimagine it in the context of global cultural business. Successfully converting cultural globalisation into a national project, Korea aspires to become a global cultural production centre that creates and exports transnationally and even 'universally' attractive pop culture commodities. The Korean Wave fuels such ambition and serves as a framework of thinking that helps Koreans to make sense of cultural globalisation, relate themselves to the world and positively envision the nation's post-industrial economic development strategy.

As explicit and formal cultural policy, Korean Wave policy aims at enhancing Korea's export and tourism capacities and to stimulate local economies. Its further integration into the country's

economic strategy means that it becomes increasingly post-cultural and moves beyond the terrain of cultural policy. As implicit, informal and inward-looking cultural policy, its helps domestic audiences, especially young-generation Koreans, to improve themselves to become an ideal post-industrial workforce who wisely manage their work and life and survive the adverse economic conditions. The post-industrial, neoliberal self that is cultivated within the framework of Korean Wave looks different from the 'neoliberal self' in the context of Western liberal democracies (McGuigan 2015) while their socio-economic and political functions might not be very different. The former evokes some of the old, industrial – 'productive' and' developmental' – ethic such as 'hardworking' and 'perseverance' but it does not necessarily promote autonomy (either from the state and the market), bohemian posture and a sense of disaffection, which are main constituents of the latter. It is telling that the typical image of Korean Wave idols and stars is imbued with the virtues of industriousness, perseverance and a positive personality rather than hedonism and a flamboyant lifestyle.

Korea as a global cultural production centre, or global cultural factory, is extremely productive in the following two senses. Firstly, its cultural production and business are increasingly integrated into the nation's post-industrial development strategy and thus eventually helps the nation's economic production. Secondly, it creates a rapidly growing body of pop culture repertory, domestic and overseas fandom, a surging number of policy initiatives and programmes, a huge amount of media reports, market information and fandom survey results, and public policy campaigns utilising pop idols and stars. The deepening convergence between public policy, entertainment, cultural fandom, export business and entrepreneurship signals that the Korean Wave as a policy phenomenon is an area where the state relies significantly on private sector actors' resources and knowledge and tries to tap into self-initiatives of members of the public and overseas consumers of Korean culture. The other side of the intensifying convergence is an absence of critical distance between different domains, activities and actors. Cultural policy makers' understanding of the country's popular culture and cultural industries does not go beyond the sweetened vision of a

successful Korean Wave; media discussion of the Korean Wave pays little attention to the increasing cultural and ethnic diversity in Korean society itself, not to mention the virtue of ‘mutual’ cultural exchange with foreign societies; cultural companies and Korean Wave stars very seldom resist working with governmental organisations; and cultural consumers and fans seem to rarely reflect on the economic, diplomatic and public policy imperatives that inform and mobilise the Korean Wave.